

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS ABUJA 002255

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PINS](#) [CVIS](#) [NI](#)

SUBJECT: NIGERIA: RIOTS IN JOS

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED - PROTECT ACCORDINGLY

11. (U) SUMMARY: Riots broke out in central Jos afternoon of September 7. Deputy Governor Botmang imposed an 1800 to 0600 curfew, made a statewide broadcast calling for calm, and authorized the police to shoot looters and trouble-makers on sight. Botmang received permission from President Obasanjo to call out the Army to back the police. By nightfall, Police sources were reporting that the incident was contained. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) PolOff 7 September (1800 local) received a call from Terry Hammack, a missionary with the Society of International Missionaries in Jos, Plateau State. According to Hammack, riots began during the afternoon in the Nassarawa district and the area near the Jos Central Mosque. He did not know the immediate cause but speculated that rumors of people putting "curses" on others may have created tensions. Reportedly, a man putting "curses" on people was caught by a crowd on 6 September, and stated that he was "hired by Alhajis" (Muslims) to curse people. Hammack commented that local politics might have also played a role.

13. (U) The caller stated that he had traveled just outside of the riot area on his motorcycle, seen fires and heard rumors that some churches had been burned. He noted that most of the car dealerships lots had been emptied quickly during the afternoon and taxis were off the roads -- people were walking to their homes. In the Government Reserved Area (GRA) where the caller lives, he stated that "you wouldn't know it was going on." Further, he believed the roads out of Jos to the north and south were still open. He said he had seen military vehicles and heard sirens heading into the city. Embassy cannot confirm that any religious structures were burned.

14. (SBU) CDA Andrews spoke at 1725 GMT with Plateau State Deputy Governor Chief Michael Botmang (Governor Dariye is on leave). Botmang stated that the riot had started on Bauchi Road and spread. Some people had been beaten by crowds and some houses had been burned. Botmang had made a broadcast asking people to remain calm. He told the CDA that he had authorized the police to shoot looters and other trouble-makers on sight. Moreover, he had asked President Obasanjo to authorize the use of the Army to back the police, and had received permission. The General Officer Commanding, 3rd Armored Division was responding. Botmang had also imposed an 1800 to 0600 curfew, and said he would travel in the city on 8 September to view the situation and gather more details. He assured CDA that the rioting would be contained and that American lives and property would be safely guarded.

15. (SBU) RSO spoke with Olayinka Balogun, Personal Staff Officer to the Inspector General of Police. Balogun stated that he had spoken to the Commissioner of Police of Plateau State, M.D. Abubakar. According to Abubakar's report, rioting had started during Friday prayers at the Central Mosque. The Mosque was filled beyond capacity with worshippers, so some worshippers carried their prayer rugs into the street to pray. One motorist, unhappy with the detour, returned to the scene with several other individuals, and a conflict ensued. Balogun stated that the problems were isolated (to the Mosque area), and that the Police had the situation under control. (COMMENT: Balogun was unspecific when asked what "under control" meant. END COMMENT). Embassy was unable to contact Commissioner M.D. Abubakar directly.

16. (SBU) Duty Officer spoke with Charles Abe, Manager at the Hilltop Hotel in Jos at 1830 GMT. Abe said there was a lot of confusion, but that the police were trying to get the situation under control. He reported that no Americans were staying at the Hilltop. At 1835 GMT, Duty Officer spoke with the Duty Manager at the Hill Station Hotel, Fomm Yakub. Yakub said there were police guarding the Hill Station Hotel,

and the uprising had not reached his location.

17. (U) An official American couple that was planning to travel to Jos on September 8 has been advised to defer the trip.

18. (U) Post intends to activate the warden system and deliver the following message: "The Embassy has received reports of disturbances in Jos, and we understand a curfew has been declared by the Deputy Governor of Plateau State between 1800 and 0600. All American citizens are urged to exercise caution until the situation has been resolved."
Andrews